

SUB. REG. 1211

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received JAN 29 1985  
date entered SEP 30 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic N/A  
and/or common RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

2. Location

street & number See continuation sheet N/A not for publication  
city, town Bridgeport N/A vicinity of  
state Connecticut code 09 county Fairfield code 001

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple ownership - see continuation sheet

street & number

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bridgeport Town Clerk

City Hall - Room 124

street & number 45 Lyon Terrace

city, town Bridgeport state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

59 South Prospect Street

city, town Hartford state Connecticut

10-30-85

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Railroad Avenue Industrial District consists of eleven factories or factory complexes (total of twenty-seven major structures) ranged along Railroad Avenue between Wording and Fairfield Avenues, in the part of Bridgeport which lies west of the city's downtown commercial area. Railroad Avenue actually is a pair of parallel streets running on either side of the large granite railroad viaduct which carries the four tracks of the Northeast Corridor. Side streets in the district running from Railroad Avenue are Organ Street and Bostwick, Hancock, and Howard Avenues.

Most of the sites included in the district are multi-building complexes in which factories from various periods are joined together or share the same lot. These historic industrial sites range in age from c.1880 to c.1930, with the greatest part of the buildings built in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Most are flat-roofed multi-story brick buildings, although cinderblock, tile, and concrete exteriors are also present. In addition to the brick load-bearing masonry factories, which typically have segmental-arched window openings between brick piers or pilasters, there are two large reinforced concrete buildings (Photographs 9 and 11). One structure includes a c.1930 steel-framed addition with glass curtain walls (Photograph 3).

Stylistic references include one Mansard-like hip roof (Photograph 1) and a Romanesque arcade of round-arched windows topped by a deeply corbelled cornice (Photographs 9 and 10). Most factories are much plainer, with simple corbelling at the cornice and along the top of the spaces between brick piers.

The essential appearance of the district's streets is one of dense industrial use, with large, closely spaced factories fronting directly on the sidewalk or street, remnants of railroad sidings running along Railroad Avenue, and factories and related buildings such as shipping docks and power houses crowded into every square foot of their parcels. The buildings are generally quite irregular in appearance, having been modified and added to over time, but there is a certain unity derived from the mostly brick exteriors, the similar scale of most of the factories, and the repetition of details such as cornice corbelling and small-pane industrial sash.

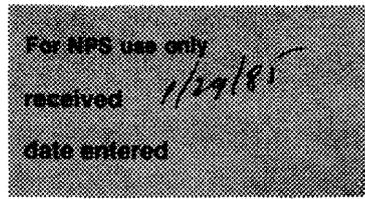
The concentration of historic sites within the district is high. Because of continued industrial use, many of the complexes include nondescript additions and small outbuildings of indeterminate age (Photograph 4). These in no way overpower the historic buildings which form the predominant part of each complex. Alterations to the historic buildings are few, mostly painted brickwork, and more rarely, replacement of the original small-pane industrial sash.

All but five of the twenty-seven major structures relate directly to the theme of the history of Bridgeport industry and were judged to contribute to the character of the district. Modern structures which form visual interruptions to the overall historic appearance of the district are limited to the 1966

(continued)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

Continuation sheet Bridgeport, CT

Item number 2

Page 1

Street Addresses:

706 Bostwick Avenue

62 Cherry Street

72 Cherry Street

80 Cherry Street

83 Colorado Avenue

471 Hancock Avenue

623 Hancock Avenue

410 Howard Avenue

546-558 Howard Avenue

375 Howard Avenue

80 Organ Street

1087 Railroad Avenue

1155 Railroad Avenue

1182 Railroad Avenue

1289 Railroad Avenue

1325 Railroad Avenue

1341 Railroad Avenue

1437 Railroad Avenue

1492 Railroad Avenue

1524 Railroad Avenue

1525 Railroad Avenue (vacant lot)

1545 Railroad Avenue (vacant lot)

1550 Railroad Avenue

1565 Railroad Avenue

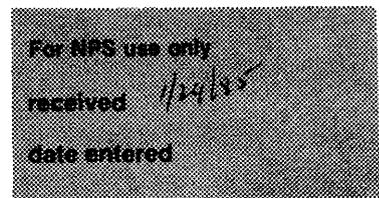
1421 State Street

1575 State Street

1759 State Street

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

Continuation sheet

Bridgeport, CT

Item number

4

Page

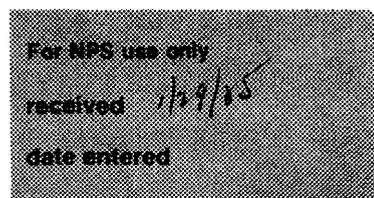
1

Property Owners:

Map/Block/Lot	Street Address	Owner	Inventory #	Contributing
	706 Bostwick Avenue	see 1437 Railroad Avenue		
3-2/302/3	62 Cherry Street	Marvin Schildkraut c/o Brody & Brody 640 Clinton Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06605	1	C
3-3/302/7	72 Cherry Street	375 Bridgeport Associates 160 Guinea Road Stamford, CT 06903	2	C
3-2/302/2	80 Cherry Street	Marvin Schildkraut c/o Brody & Brody 640 Clinton Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06605	3	C
12-13/1230/17	83 Colorado Avenue	Rickard Realty Corp. Box 328 Greens Farms, CT 06436	5A	C
32/301/2	471 Hancock Avenue	Sun Chemical Corp. 200 Park Avenue New York, NY 10017	4	C
12-9/1233/20A	623 Hancock Avenue	Westinghouse Electric Gateway Center - Tax Dept. Pittsburgh, PA 15222	12B	C
3-3/303/1B	410 Howard Avenue	Edward L. & Arthur Siegal P.O. Box 234 Hartford, CT 06101	14 14A	NC NC
12-9/1230/5,6A	546-558 Howard Avenue	Steinberg Realty Corp. P.O. Box 3125 Bridgeport, CT 06605	5	C
3-2/302/4	375 Howard Avenue	375 Bridgeport Associates 160 Guinea Road Stamford, CT 06903	6	C

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

Continuation sheet Bridgeport, CT

Item number 4

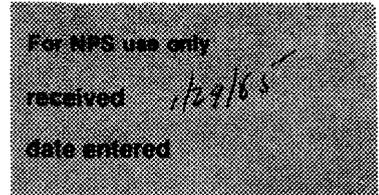
Page 2

Property Owners:

12-9/1231/2A	80 Organ Street	Westinghouse Electric Gateway Center - Tax Dept. Pittsburgh, PA 15222	12A	C
3-3/303/13A	1087 Railroad Avenue	Jerold Serman 46 Davis Hill Road Weston, CT 06883	7 7A	C NC
3-3/303/14A	1155 Railroad Avenue	Pratt-Read Corp. 1155 Railroad Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06605	7C 7B	NC C
12-9/1230/11	1182 Railroad Avenue	Rickard Realty Corp. Box 328 Greens Farms, CT 06436	8	
3-2/302/5	1289 Railroad Avenue	Arthur D. McGovern 202 Golf Street Milford, CT 06460	9	C
3-2/302/6	1325 Railroad Avenue	Marvin Schildkraut c/o Brody & Brody 640 Clinton Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06605	1A	C
3-2/302/1	1341 Railroad Avenue	Sun Chemical Corp. 200 Park Avenue New York, NY 10017	3A	C
3-2/301/1	1437 Railroad Avenue 706 Bostwick Avenue	Tuck-It-Away, Bridgeport c/o Sprayregan 3261 Broadway New York, NY 10027	10 10A 10B	C C C
12-5/1236/4	1492 Railroad Avenue	Harvey Hubbell, Inc. 66 Bostwick Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06605	13C	NC
12-5/1236/3	1524 Railroad Avenue	Harvey Hubbell, Inc. 66 Bostwick Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06605	13D	C

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

Continuation sheet Bridgeport, CT

Item number 4

Page 3

Property Owners:

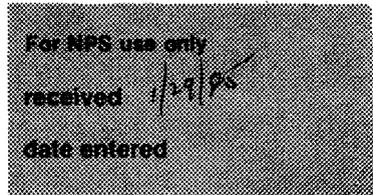
3-1/300/20A	1525 Railroad Avenue	Harvey Hubbell, Inc. 66 Bostwick Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06605	Vacant lot
3-1/300/20C	1545 Railroad Avenue	Ernest Breiner <u>et al.</u> United Carpet Post Road Westport, CT 06880	Vacant lot
12-5/1236/3A	1550 Railroad Avenue	Harvey Hubbell, Inc. 66 Bostwick Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06605	13E C
3-1/300/10A	1565 Railroad Avenue	United Pattern Co. 1565 Railroad Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06605	11 C
12-9/1232/1	1421 State Street	Westinghouse Electric Gateway Center - Tax Dept. Pittsburgh, PA 15222	12 C
12-9/1235/1	1575 State Street	Harvey Hubbell Inc. 66 Bostwick Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06605	13 C 13A C
12-5/1236/2	1759 State Street	Harvey Hubbell Inc. 66 Bostwick Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06605	13B C

Railroad Right-of-Way

National Railroad Passenger Corporation  
(AMTRAK)  
400 North Capitol Street N.W.  
Washington, DC 20001

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT  
Bridgeport, CT Item number 6

Page 1

Existing Surveys (continued):

Bridgeport Historic Industrial Sites

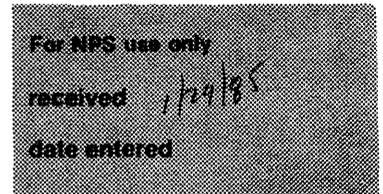
Local - 1984

Records deposited with Connecticut Historical Commission

59 South Prospect Street  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT  
Continuation sheet Bridgeport, CT Item number 7 Page 1

Description (continued):

Hubbell research/parking facility at the corner of Bostwick and Railroad Avenues, the c.1950 expansions associated with the Dictaphone's ownership of the Union Ribbon Factory (Photograph 6), and a truck garage on Howard Avenue (Photograph 5).

Descriptions of individual buildings are included in the inventory which follows. The numbers are keyed to the photograph labels and the sketch map. Letter designations (e.g., 12A) are used to group together buildings which are now or were until recently part of larger industrial complexes.

INVENTORY OF CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

1 through 3. BRIDGEPORT ORGAN COMPANY, 62-80 Cherry Street (Photograph 1). Built c.1880, this large complex was by 1889 occupied by nine other tenants besides the organ company. By 1898 the whole complex had been taken over by American Graphophone. The chief components are:

1. 62 Cherry Street, a three-story brick-pier factory raised c.1900 from its original two-story height. Shallow-pitch gable roof. Segmental-arched windows with small-pane sash. Three-story stair tower, southeast corner. Early tenants include Bostwick Button Company and Steel Cutting Company, manufacturers of steel shanks.

1A. The above building continues through to Railroad Avenue (Photograph 2), joining the 1916 concrete factory of American Graphophone (#9). Early tenants of this section include Bridgeport Silk and Cornwall and Patterson, maker of organ and piano hardware items.

2. A three-story steel-framed building, c.1925, built onto the c.1900 one and two-story brick power house which served the complex.

3. A large two-and-one-half story c.1880 double-hip-roof structure of brick-pier construction, the original home of Bridgeport Organ. Small-pane metal sash in segmental-arched openings. Wide corbelled cornice. Four brick-faced gable-roofed dormers on the Cherry Street elevation, with other all-frame dormers along the sides. To the east, connecting it with #1, is a three-story (top story added) infill which features an arcade of two-story round-arched openings, above which is patterned brickwork and a corbelled cornice. Other early tenants include Chadwick Spool Cotton and L.L. Loomer Corsets. Around 1930 two bays were added to the west elevation by Casco: the steel-framed addition has glass curtain walls (Photograph c.1900 sections of brick-pier factories, and a c.1930 glass-walled extension.

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**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

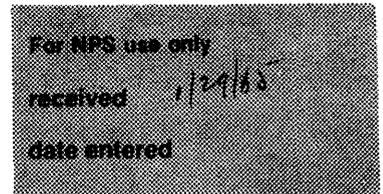
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

Continuation sheet Bridgeport, CT

Item number 7

Page 2



Description (continued):

3A. The above building continues through to Railroad Avenue, where a full third story has been added, as well as three stories of the same glass-and-steel addition on Hancock Avenue. Early occupants other than the organ company include Connecticut Box Company, Meteor Despatch (cash carriers), and the Cylindrograph Company (makers of embroiderers).

4. WILMOT AND HOBBS (now Casco), 471 Hancock Avenue (Photograph 4). A large complex of buildings dating from 1895 and covering an square area approximately 375' on a side. Along Railroad Avenue is a three-story brick-pier factory with wooden small-pane sash in rectangular openings, bluestone sills, a corbelled cornice, and a brick blind-arcade parapet. A four-story tower stands at the southwest corner. A tall one-story cold-rolling mill facing Hancock Avenue has its three roof monitors concealed by a similar but taller parapet. Similar construction and decorative details are found on the one and two-story portions along Cherry Street.

5. RICKARD'S TRUCKING AND COLD STORAGE, 546-558 Howard Avenue. A complex of one, two and three-story brick buildings started c. 1900 and subsequently enlarged. The site includes a one-story multi-bay monitor-roofed garage, a two-story building with brownstone trim, and a tall flat-roofed structure with blank brick walls. This building accomodated trucking and cold storga nusinesses, including an ice-making plant. To the rear, fronting on Colorado Avenue, is:

5A. 83 Colorado Avenue (Colorado Avenue Auto Body), a one-story brick garage attached to #5, above.

6. AMERICAN GRAPHAPHONE FIRST FACTORY, 375 Howard Avenue (Photograph 5, left). A three-story saw-tooth roofed brick-pier factory c.1905. Extensive additions, mostly brick and one and two stories, to the rear.

7. UNION RIBBON FACTORY, 1087 Railroad Avenue (Photograph 6). A c.1900 three-story brick-pier factory, 40' x 100' with a central stair-tower projection. Paired segmental-arched openings are mostly fitted with modern sash and panels; simple cornice corbelling. Built for ribbon manufacture by the Yost Typewriter Company; taken over in 1912 by Remington and later by Dictaphone. Associated c.1950 manufacturing structures to either side.

7B. Boiler house, 1155 Railroad Avenue (rear). A c.1900 high one-story brick boiler house with attached smokestack. Round-arched windows. Shallow-pitched gable roof. Associated with the Yost Typewriter Company, of which only the ribbon factory (#7, above) remains. Later part of Dictaphone.

(continued)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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date entered

Continuation sheet RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT  
Bridgeport, CT Item number 7 Page 3

Description (continued):

8. RICKARD'S STORAGE, 1182 Railroad Avenue (Photograph 7). A large 125' x 200' warehouse with two main components. The 1904 three-story brick part on the corner of Howard Avenue has a brownstone-ashlar first-story facade and a stepped parapet. The four-story part to the right, c.1913-1917, has brick suggesting rustication on the first story and a corbelled cornice. Historically related to a separate cold-storage facility on Howard Avenue (#5).

9. AMERICAN GRAPHAPHONE SECOND FACTORY, 1289 Railroad Avenue (Photograph 5, background). A large six-story reinforced-concrete factory, 60' x 325', built in 1916 by T.J. Pardy Construction. Brick curtain walls with large expanses of small-pane metal sash.

10. RAYBESTOS (Fibreglas Evercoat), 1437 Railroad Avenue (Photograph 8, middle). A three-story flat-roofed brick building dating from 1913. Small-pane metal sash set into wide openings with shelf-angle lintels. Recent (after 1939) four-story concrete and one-story brick additions at rear. Other buildings now part of this complex include:

10A. 706 Bostwick Avenue, a two-story brick-pier building with similar window treatment. Built c.1925 as a warehouse for the D.M. Read department store.

10B. 1437 Railroad Avenue, rear, a two-story building with rough-surfaced concrete block walls and a stepped gable concealing its monitor roof. Built c.1910-1915 as the machine shop for Raybestos.

11. HURWOOD MANUFACTURING (United Pattern Company), 1565 Railroad Avenue (Photograph 8, right). A 1904 three-story flat-roofed brick-pier factory with a square-plan central projecting flat-roofed tower, at the base of which is a double-door entrance with a fanlight. Small-pane sash in segmental-arched openings. Simple corbelling, with longer corbels along the cornice of the tower. To the rear are a small power house, a three-story ell with a monitor roof to which has been added a long one-story brick extension, and a frame and cinderblock one-story building which shares a party wall with a warehouse to the west.

12. BRYANT ELECTRIC COMPANY, 1421 State Street (Photograph 9). A large four-story brick complex dating from 1902 and covering the entire block. Romanesque detailing includes round-arched windows with brick drip molds on the fourth floor and long cornice corbels. Small-pane sash; segmental arched openings on the third floor. Rounded corners on the brick-piers. Entrance is in a rounded corner at the intersection of State and Organ Streets. Power house at the rear. Two portions on Hancock Avenue have monitor roofs. Other parts of the complex include:

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

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RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

Continuation sheet Bridgeport, CT

Item number 7

Page 4

Description (continued):

12A. 80 Organ Street (Photograph 10), a similarly detailed four-story brick factory with a large tower in one vertex of its t-shaped plan. Three-story elevated bridge connects it with the main complex.

12B. 623 Hancock Avenue, a large one-story brick garage with the same corbelled cornice.

13. HARVEY HUBBELL INC., 1575 State Street (Photograph 11). A 1909 four-story reinforced concrete factory with a flat roof and prominent coved cornice. U-shaped plan has major elevations on both State Street and Bostwick Avenue, with a large wing to the rear. Entrance near corner is recessed and has a fluted metal surround. Metal sash is horizontally divided. Extension, 200' long, 1920s, on State Street. Part of a multi-building complex:

13A. 1575 State Street, rear (Photograph 12), a large one-story brick factory with sawtooth roof, segmental-arched windows, and simple corbelling. One-story c.1940 and c.1960 brick additions to north.

13B. 1759 State Street, a one-story 350' x 50' building with a saw-tooth roof, c.1915, tile exterior walls.

13D. 1524 Railroad Avenue, a small one-story brick building with steel-framed roof, c.1915, formerly part of Hatheway Manufacturing.

13E. 1550 Railroad Avenue, a small one-story brick and cinder-block building, c.1920, formerly the shipping department of Hatheway Manufacturing.

INVENTORY OF NONCONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

7A. 1087 Railroad Avenue, a c.1950 one-story factory, steel-framed with brick exterior walls and two monitors along its flat roof. Formerly part of the Dictaphone complex.

7C. Cornwall & Patterson, 1155 Railroad Avenue, a c.1950 four-story factory with a one-story extension to the south. Steel-framed with brick and tile exterior (Photograph 6). Formerly part of Dictaphone.

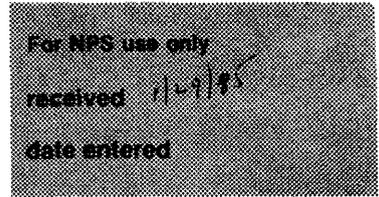
13C. Hubbell Technical Center, 1492 Railroad Avenue, 1966, a large three-story research and parking-garage facility.

14. Edart Truck Rental, one-story cement-block faced multi-bay garage c.1980 (Photograph 5).

14A. Small one-story frame office building c.1950, formerly part of Dictaphone.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT  
Continuation sheet Bridgeport, CT Item number 7 Page 5

Description (continued):

RAILROAD VIADUCT

The railroad right-of-way which forms the spine of the Railroad Avenue Industrial District is a four-track corridor elevated about 15' above the level of Railroad Avenue, one lane of which runs on either side of the right-of-way. The sides are constructed of huge granite blocks, and along the top are the characteristic catenary towers of the New Haven Railroad electrification (completed in 1907). Bridgeport's granite railroad viaduct was probably built about 1895 as part of that railroad's massive track improvement program, in which four parallel tracks replaced the previous two-track right-of-way and most urban grade-level crossings were eliminated by raising the tracks above the streets. The viaduct runs for several miles through downtown Bridgeport, with another very similar lengthy section running north up the middle of Housatonic Avenue.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Criteria A,C

**Specific dates** See inventory, Item 7 **Builder/Architect** Not known

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### Summary Statement of Significance

The buildings in the Railroad Avenue Industrial District play an important role in documenting Bridgeport's heritage. The historical development of Bridgeport, the leading manufacturing city in Connecticut in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, is illustrated by factories associated with important Bridgeport companies and archetypal Bridgeport products, including primary metals, corsets, organs, typewriters, and electrical devices (Criterion A). The district represents the most cohesive cluster of historic industrial sites remaining in Bridgeport. Among the major Bridgeport manufacturers associated with these factories are Bridgeport Organ, Wilmot and Hobbs, American Graphophone, Raybestos, Casco Manufacturing, Bryant Electric, and Harvey Hubell, Inc. The district's buildings are also significant because they illustrate the typical factory architecture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with examples of somewhat stylish Victorian factories, relatively plain c.1900 brick-pier mills, reinforced concrete buildings, and even c.1930 structural steel/glass curtain wall construction (Criterion C).

#### Historical Development of Bridgeport

Industry was the reason Bridgeport became a major city. Prior to the 1780s the area which would become Bridgeport was a remote and thinly populated part of the town of Stratford. In the 1790s, a village of merchants, sea captains, sailors, and shopkeepers grew up around Black Rock Harbor, prospering from an increase in trade between Connecticut and the West Indies. In 1800 this area was incorporated as the Borough of Bridgeport. Other than the chandlers, shoemakers, blacksmiths and coopers found in every maritime community, Bridgeport had little manufacturing. The largest enterprises of this period were tide-powered flour mills grinding grain for shipment to the Islands.

The 1830s were a period of substantial growth for Bridgeport, one directly related to industrial development. Three products -- saddles, carriages, and garments -- were made in Bridgeport at a large scale of production for non-local markets. Although these industries undoubtedly used traditional hand-manufacture techniques, they were not small: the eight saddlery and carriage firms employed a total of 306 men, and 650 women worked for two companies making shirts. By 1840 Bridgeport had surpassed in population all the other port towns of Fairfield County, and in manufacturing it began to rival the much larger cities of Hartford and New Haven. Although these early industries did not lead directly into later phases of industrialization, they were early proof that manufacturing was one path to growth and prosperity.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Bridgeport, Connecticut Handbook. Bridgeport: Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce, 1924.

Bridgeport Directory, 1880-1940. (continued)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Approx. 50 acres

Quadrangle name Bridgeport

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UTM References See continuation sheet

A 

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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries N/A

state code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Bruce Clouette, Matthew Roth & Patricia Devoe, edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization Historic Resource Consultants

date July 15, 1984

street & number The Colt Armory  
55 Van Dyke Avenue

telephone (203) 547-0268

city or town Hartford

state Connecticut

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

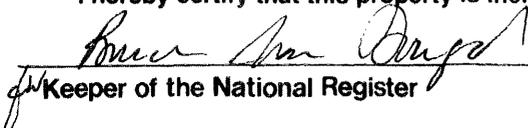


title Connecticut Historical Commission

date 1/14/85

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

  
Keeper of the National Register

date 9/30/85

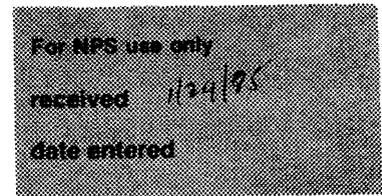
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT Item number 8 Page 1  
Bridgeport, CT

Significance (continued):

Bridgeport lagged behind other Connecticut industrial towns in two important areas: the city was not tied in to the state's major sources of capital, Hartford and New Haven, and it was remote from the centers of innovation in mass-production technology. Unlike the clock, hardware and armaments industries of central Connecticut, which had been transformed by advances in precision machining, Bridgeport's early industries, though large, relied on hand-production techniques and small-shop, pre-industrial organization.

Remarkably enough, Bridgeport's initial shortcomings were overcome simply by bringing in outside capital and technology. Led by the initial transplanting of sewing machine and armaments factories by Bridgeport entrepreneurs (such as P.T. Barnum) who lured outside capitalists to relocate there, and aided by advantages such as a good harbor, excellent railroad connections, and proximity to manufacturing and financial connections in New York City, Bridgeport developed a thriving industrial economy unmatched elsewhere in the state. Once established, the city's pioneer enterprises affected Bridgeport as if they had developed there, creating demand for component parts and services, spinning off related industries, and producing the kind of environment in which technological innovation could become an ongoing process.

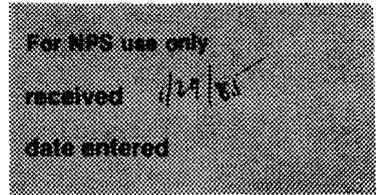
Once Bridgeport had established several large manufacturing enterprises, numerous other sectors developed in response. One was primary metals manufacture, in which the steel and brass material used in manufacturing were provided in the form of sheet, tube or wire. Another sector was made up of numerous machinists and patternmakers which serviced the needs of the major industries. Finally, as a large industrial city, Bridgeport developed a need for commercial warehouses and cold storage facilities.

Much of the success of Bridgeport industry was due to the tremendous expansion in material possessions which characterized the late 19th century. Because of innovations in mass-production techniques, products which were formerly very expensive became affordable by a large segment of the American population. Machine-made Bridgeport products, such as parlor organs, mechanical toys, ready-to-wear clothing, and tableware responded to (and helped create) the Victorian material lifestyle. At the same time, new inventions which relied on precision mechanisms appeared on the American scene: among those made in Bridgeport were sewing machines, typewriters, and phonographs.

By the beginning of the 20th century Bridgeport's industrial production had outpaced not only Waterbury but the much larger cities of Hartford and New Haven as well. Industrialization transformed the physical appearance of the city, which even today is dominated by the smokestacks of one large factory after another. It also altered the city's social fabric, as immigrants from every major European country settled in Bridgeport looking for work in one of the city's many factories. Bridgeport around 1900 was one of the most thoroughly workingclass and union-conscious communities in Connecticut.

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Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet    RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT    Item number    8    Page    2  
                                 Bridgeport, CT

Significance (continued):

In the early years of the 20th century, Bridgeport's fortunes continued to rise, as the city rode the ever more powerful wave of the consumer lifestyle. Among the characteristic products of the new century which were produced in Bridgeport were electrical products and automotive parts. World War I brought an unprecedented boom to Bridgeport. Many of the city's large firms won government contracts for munitions and war-related materials and embarked on substantial programs of physical expansion. Although Bridgeport industry declined somewhat from its World War I peak, the 1920s were still prosperous times for the city and its workers. With electrical products and automotive components in the lead, the city's economy continued to be strong and outpaced other Connecticut cities in industrial production. The Depression of the 1930s was a tremendous blow, however, and except for a brief surge during World War II, Bridgeport grew very little after the Great Crash of 1929.

In the postwar years much of the city's manufacturing has moved to out-lying areas such as Stratford, where Sikorsky Helicopter is located, or, as part of the general decline of industry in the Northeast, out-of-state or even to foreign countries. Many of the city's historic factories, like some of those along Railroad Avenue, now stand vacant or underutilized. Nevertheless, buildings such as those in this district are important as reminders of Bridgeport's unique historical experience, the experience of massive industrial growth which made Bridgeport the city we know today.

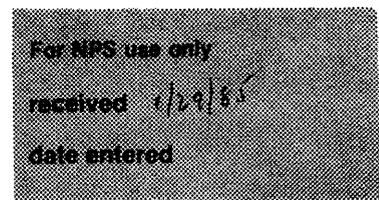
Railroad Avenue

Prior to its intensive industrialization, the largest enterprise in the area encompassed by the district was the winter headquarters of P.T. Barnum's circus. Barnum, who owned a large portion of the property in the area, induced the Sharps Rifle Company to relocate from Hartford in 1875. Nothing remains of the original Sharps complex on the site of #7 (Photograph 6). However, Sharps in the 1880s gave way to another manufacturer of precision mechanisms, the Yost Typewriter Company. Their c.1900 addition to the Sharps complex, the Union Ribbon Factory, is at the eastern edge of the district. G.W.N. Yost was a Bridgeport inventor who had sold designs to Remington before starting his own factory. Yost never took full credit for his innovations, instead stressing that the combined talents of many Bridgeport mechanics had made possible his success. The remaining Yost factory is thus a symbol of the interrelationships which, once started by seed industries like Sharps, made Bridgeport a center of innovation in precision mechanisms. Yost's company was absorbed by Remington in 1912.

The next complex to be developed was that of the Bridgeport Organ Company (#'s 1, 1A, 2, and 3; Photographs 1 and 2). Bridgeport Organ made parlor organs with ornate carved wooden cases, "such elegant and artistic designs as

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT  
Continuation sheet Bridgeport, CT Item number 8 Page 3

Significance (continued):

the cultured taste of the public may demand" (from a Bridgeport Organ catalog of the 1880s). Part of their space was rented to Cornwall and Patterson, makers of specialized organ and piano hardware. The arrangement illustrates how a major consumer-oriented industry, the manufacture of parlor organs, generated demand for narrowly focused secondary manufacturers who served not a consumer market but rather the needs of manufacturers (there were other organ makers in Bridgeport besides Bridgeport Organ).

It seems likely that Bridgeport Organ always intended to rent out much of their large facility: by 1889 there were eight tenants in the building in addition to Bridgeport Organ and Cornwall and Patterson. The mix of tenants in that year was typical of Bridgeport as a whole. There were makers of intricate mechanisms: Meteor Despatch, manufacturers of pneumatic cash-carrier systems, and the Cylindrograph Company, makers of automatic embroidering machines. There was a corset maker, L.L.Loomer. Bridgeport was a major center for the manufacture of corsets during this period. Warner Brothers was the largest, but L.L. Loomer also had a large market share. Their "LaResista" model promised to provide the feminine figure required by Victorian fashion. Secondary industries related to garment manufacture were also found in the complex: Bostwick Button, Bridgeport Silk, and the Chadwick spool cotton factory. Some of these occupants (Bridgeport Organ, Cornwall and Patterson, L.L. Loomer) went on to build even larger plants of their own as their business expanded, but all of these companies, however short-lived, illustrate the diversity and vitality of Bridgeport's industrial sector.

Primary metal manufacture, as well as the theme of major New York City investment, is represented by the Wilmot and Hobbs property (#4, Photograph 4). Wilmot and Hobbs was formed by New York manufacturers who saw a market in Bridgeport for rolled steel which could be stamped with power presses into a variety of mass-produced items. In addition to supplying the raw material which went into Bridgeport sewing machines, typewriters, gun parts and table-ware, Wilmot and Hobbs itself manufactured steel flooring and lamps. Their earliest buildings were destroyed by fire in 1895. The Wilmot Hobbs mill consumed vast quantities of iron and steel billets brought in on railroad cars, just one example of how important the railroad line (the major line between New York and Boston) was to establishing industry in this area.

Other metal-products manufacturers which located in the area encompassed by the district, and which made products typical of Bridgeport's industrial economy, include Hurwood Manufacturing (#11, Photograph 8), makers of chucks, screwdrivers, and awls; and Hatheway Manufacturing Company (#13B), makers of buckles and metal buttons.

Twentieth century products are represented in the district by the large plants of Hubbell and Bryant, two of the largest makers of electrical products (switches, motors, connectors, etc.) of the period and major Bridgeport

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Continuation sheet RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT  
Bridgeport, CT Item number 8 Page 4

Significance (continued):

employers. Hubbell (#'s 13 - 13E, Photographs 11 and 12) started in 1888 making tools, machinery, and screws, but by 1900 electrical products developed by founder Harvey Hubbell (sockets, plugs, toggle switches) had become an equally important part of their business. The present four-story concrete factory dates from 1909, with the large one-story saw-toothed roof plant along State Street (#13B) built during the World War I boom. Bryant Electric also built a large plant in the first years of this century (#12, 12A, 12B, Photographs 9 and 10). Moved to this site in 1889 when founder W.C. Bryant purchased land from P.T. Barnum, Bryant produced switches and other electrical supply items. The company absorbed Hartford-based Perkins Switch in 1900, only to itself be incorporated into Westinghouse Electric two years later. Bryant and Hubbell capitalized on the spread of electrification through America in the early years of this century. As demand for electrical components grew, so did business for these two companies, and with it, prosperity for Bridgeport.

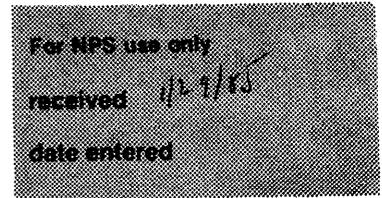
Automobile components were another important part of Bridgeport's economy in the early 20th century and helped pull the city out of the slump which followed World War I. "Raybestos" brake linings were made by the Royal Manufacturing Company (#10, 10B; Photograph 8), and fans, shift knobs, heaters, and cigar lighters were made by Casco, which was a subsequent owner of the Bridgeport Organ property. Coe-Stanley Manufacturing took over Hurwood's plant and made automobile pumps and horns.

Two of the factories are associated with American Graphophone, the industry leader in sound recording devices at the turn of the century. American Graphophone made both playing machines and records. By 1898 they had taken over all of the former Bridgeport Organ complex, and around 1905 they built a new three-story, sawtoothed roof building on Howard Avenue (#6, Photograph 5). The demand for players and records was so great that in 1916 they erected the huge six-story reinforced concrete factory at the north end of the block. The Graphophone typifies the consumer-oriented complex-mechanism product which made Bridgeport a leading industrial city. By the 1920s, when the radio was replacing the graphophone as a best-selling home entertainment device, American Graphophone was already pioneering recording devices for the office market. After World War II the company built new large factories in the area (Photograph 6) and under the name Dictaphone remained one of Bridgeport's major employers through the 1970s.

Industrial areas often have warehouses interspersed among the factories, and the Railroad Avenue area is no exception. Drawing upon the same transportation advantage which made manufacturers locate there, D. M. Read, a large downtown department store, built its warehouse on the corner of Bostwick and Railroad Avenues (10A, Photograph 8, center). Even larger was the storage and trucking firm run by Irish immigrant Christopher Rickard (#5, 5A, and 8; Photograph 7). Rickard in his sprawling complex had space for household storage, general warehousing, automobile storage, and mechanically

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Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT  
Bridgeport, CT Item number 8 Page 5

Significance (continued):

refrigerated cold storage for fruit and dairy products.

Architectural Significance

The buildings in the Railroad Avenue Industrial District are typical of the industrial design of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Most of the buildings are plainly detailed structures with brick-pier walls, wide segmental-arched windows, long and narrow proportions, and flat or shallow-pitched roofs. All these features had advantages in providing economical, functional space for the mechanized manufacture therein. Brick-pier walls (commonly called pilaster-mill construction) concentrated the loadbearing thrust in full-height piers of thicker dimensions, allowing wider window openings in between and therefore greater natural lighting. There also was probably some saving over a uniformly thick wall in the total amount of brick needed. The long and narrow proportions of most of the factories reflect both a concern for lighting (no space was far from a window in a narrow factory) and an adaptation to the needs of line-shaft-powered manufacturing, in which a single shaft running the length of each floor of the factory would power machines arranged in rows to either side. Flat or shallow-pitched roofs, made possible by advances in waterproof coal-tar coverings, eliminated both the fire hazard associated with exposed pitched-roof framing and the accompanying cramped attic space. A few early 20th-century factories in the district (Photographs 5 and 12) have their flat roofs fitted with the characteristic sawtooth monitors, filling the story below with light.

Although two factories show some stylistic flourish (Bridgeport Organ, Photograph 1, and Bryant Electric, Photograph 9), most have only simple cornice corbelling (itself a safety improvement over wooden cornices) to relieve the utilitarian appearance of the exteriors. Most of the buildings in the district lack the aesthetic presence created by the elaborate towers of eastern Connecticut textile mills, yet by that very plainness they are typical of the industrial construction of the period.

The district includes two examples of reinforced concrete construction, a major innovation in large multi-story mill design of the twentieth century. Concrete is significant because it offered wider bays, more window space, and better fire resistance. When Hubbell was erected in 1909 (Photograph 11), most Bridgeport factories were still being built of brick, like Bryant Electric. But by the time of the great expansion which accompanied World War I, large factories such as that built by American Graphophone in 1916 (Photograph 5) were more likely to be reinforced concrete.

Finally, Casco's c.1930 addition to the Bridgeport Organ plant (Photograph 3) shows the glass-wall, steel-frame construction which typified up-to-date industrial architecture in the 1920s and 1930s. This type of

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RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

Continuation sheet Bridgeport, CT

Item number

8

Page 6

Significance (continued):

construction, pioneered in the automobile industry, relied on the strength of a structural steel frame, thereby allowing a nearly all-glass curtain wall. Economical to erect, providing an unprecedented amount of natural light, and adaptable to a wide variety of industrial processes (Casco made automotive accessories), the technique also produced the horizontal, uncluttered, modernistic appearance favored in that period.

Significance as an Industrial Area

Although the major significance of this arealies in its associations with important Bridgeport industrial episodes and the buildings' typicality as examples of factory architecture, the district is also significant as a representative cluster of industrial plants. In Bridgeport, as in other industrial cities, factories were concentrated in particular areas which took on a unique appearance. These manufacturing centers were characterized by a high overall building density, central railroad facilities, and numerous large brick factory buildings from a broad time span corresponding to the city's periods of economic growth. The explanation for the clustering of factories, seen in most Connecticut cities (Hartford's Capitol Avenue is extremely analagous), is primarily a matter of transportation advantages: the railroad offered the means to transport raw materials, coal for steam engines, and finished products. Therefore, factories had to locate along one of the city's industrial spurs which, because the main lines were often high-traffic elevated rights-of-way, were necessarily limited. A secondary reason for clustering can be found in the industrial history of the buildings: many companies started out renting space as tenants in other buildings and then went on to build their own factories nearby.

Railroad Avenue embodies all the distinctive characteristics of the type: the buildings are set close to the sidewalk and fill their lots with large multi-story factory buildings, the factories span a broad time period from the last quarter of the 19th-century to c.1930, when Bridgeport's economic expansion ceased, and the factories are clustered along a railroad spine. At least two of the companies, American Gramophone and Casco, illustrate the pattern of first renting space and then expanding into larger nearby facilities.

Railroad Avenue represents the best remaining factory district in Bridgeport. A recent thematic survey of 227 industrial sites in that city not only identified several of the factories as among Bridgeport's most historically significant, but also cited the area as the only cluster which substantially retains its historic appearance. The only other district recommended as meeting the criteria for listing in the National Register was a small district of two adjacent corset factories, a much more limited and specialized theme. Bridgeport had two other areas which were similar to

(continued)

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Continuation sheet      RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT      Item number      8      Page 7  
                                 Bridgeport, CT

Significance (continued):

Railroad Avenue: one paralleling the same railroad line in East Bridgeport and another along a similar elevated line running north on Housatonic Avenue. Both other clusters are marked by significant intervening areas of demolition of industrial structures and modern construction. Unlike Railroad Avenue, where alterations and expansion mostly reflect the industrial development of the area in the historic period (c.1870-1930), these areas are not cohesive and do not convey the essence of urban factory districts.

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RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

Continuation sheet Bridgeport, CT

Item number 9

Page 1

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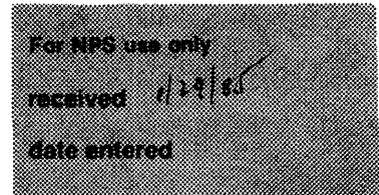
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Continuation sheet RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT  
Bridgeport, CT Item number 10

Page 1

Geographical Data (continued):

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RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT  
Continuation sheet Bridgeport, CT Item number 10 Page 2

Geographical Data (continued):

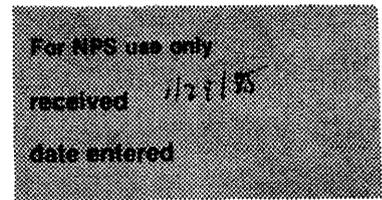
Verbal Boundary Description and Justification:

Beginning at the northwest corner of Parcel 12-5/1236/2 (Map, Block and Lot from Bridgeport Assessor Records), the boundary runs northeasterly along the southern edge of State Street to the corner of Lesbia Street. It then turns south and follows the western edge of Lesbia Street, turning east to follow along the northern edge of Railroad Avenue. At Hancock Avenue it turns north and runs along the eastern edge of Hancock Avenue to the southeast corner of Parcel 12-9/1233/20A, where it turns west and runs 125.25' before turning north and running to the lot's north property line, which it follows easterly back to Hancock Avenue. The boundary crosses Hancock Avenue to a corner of Parcel 12-9/1232/1 and follows the property line of that lot easterly and then northerly to State Street. It runs in a northeasterly direction along the southern edge of State Street and then runs south along the western edge of Organ Street. It crosses Organ Street to the northwest corner of Parcel 12-9/1231/2A and then runs east, south and west along the line of that lot back to Organ Street. It crosses Oegan Street and continues along the western edge to Railroad Avenue. It turns east to follow along the northern edge of Railroad Avenue, then turns north and runs along the western edge of Howard Avenue. It turns east and crosses Howard Avenue to the northwest corner of Parcel 12-13/1230/5. It follows the line of that lot easterly and then continues along the line of Parcel 12-13/1230/17 to Colorado Avenue. It runs south along the western edge of Colorado Avenue and then westerly along the southern line of Parcel 12-13/1230/17 to the rear property line of Parcel 12-13/1230/5. It runs south along that line and then continues easterly, southerly, westerly, northerly, and westerly along the lines of that lot back to Howard Avenue.

The boundary follows the eastern edge of Howard Avenue southerly to the northwest corner of Parcel 12-13/1230/11. It runs easterly and southerly along the line of that lot to Railroad Avenue. The boundary crosses Railroad Avenue and continues easterly along the southern edge of Railroad Avenue to Wordin Avenue, where it turns and runs in a southwesterly direction along the western edge of Wordin Avenue to the southeast corner of Parcel 3-3/303/13A. It follows the line of that lot westerly and southerly to North Frontage Street (Cherry Street). The boundary runs westward along the northern edge of North Frontage and Cherry Streets to the corner of Bostwick Avenue. It then crosses Bostwick Avenue to the southeast corner of Parcel 3-1/300/20A and continues in a northwesterly direction along the lines of Parcels 3-1/300/20A, 20C, and 10A. The boundary turns north at the southwest corner of Parcel 3-1/300/10A and follows the line of that lot to Railroad Avenue. It crosses Railroad Avenue and runs westerly along the northern edge to the southwest corner of Parcel 12-5/1236/2, continuing northerly, northeasterly, easterly, and then northerly again along the line of that lot to the first point.

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Inventory—Nomination Form**



RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT  
Continuation sheet Bridgeport, CT Item number 10

Page 3

Geographical Data (continued):

Boundary Justification:

The boundary of the district was delineated on both thematic and visual grounds. Since the significance of the district is that these buildings reflect the industrial heritage of Bridgeport and are typical representatives of the factory architecture of their period, only structures directly related to industry were included. Moreover, in order to give the district a high concentration of historic industrial structures, visual boundaries such as the Connecticut Turnpike (I-95) were used to isolate this group of buildings.

The railroad viaduct forms a spine linking the industrial complexes together. Although from ground level the viaduct often forms a visual barrier between the two sides of Railroad Avenue, factories on one side are clearly visible from the other along the side streets (Photographs 5 and 8). Moreover, the railroad is an important historical connection among the sites: transportation was one of the chief reasons so much industry located in this area.

The southern boundary of the district, Cherry Street, runs along the north side of the Connecticut Turnpike. Although there are other historic industrial sites south of the turnpike, none can be easily seen from the district because of the overwhelming visual effect of the highway.

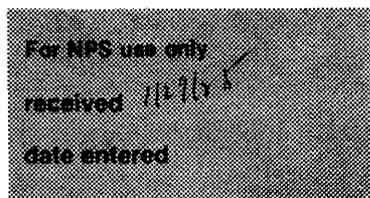
The easternmost site included on the south side of Railroad Avenue is the Union Ribbon Factory (Photograph 6). Although this complex is surrounded by a large parking area and includes modern industrial structures as noncontributing buildings, the old part of the complex is visible from the district and is a comparable c.1900 factory. Moreover, there were no other structures of appropriate age to the east for quite some distance.

The western boundary stops at the last contiguous manufacturing structure on both sides of the street. A nondescript c.1913 substation was not included.

The northern boundary is State Street. Both Bryant and Hubbell extend all the way from Railroad Avenue to State Street, and in fact have their main office entrances at the State Street corners. State Street is predominantly a commercial area with 19th and early 20th-century buildings. Because the theme of the district is industrial, the surrounding commercial uses on State Street (which extend many blocks eastward) were not included. Related to the problem of diluting the concentration of industrial buildings in the district is the exclusion of nearby factories north of State Street and east of Fairfield Avenue: to include them would make the northern edge extremely ragged and would destroy the visual unity in the district.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet RAILROAD AVENUE INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT  
Bridgeport, CT Item number 10

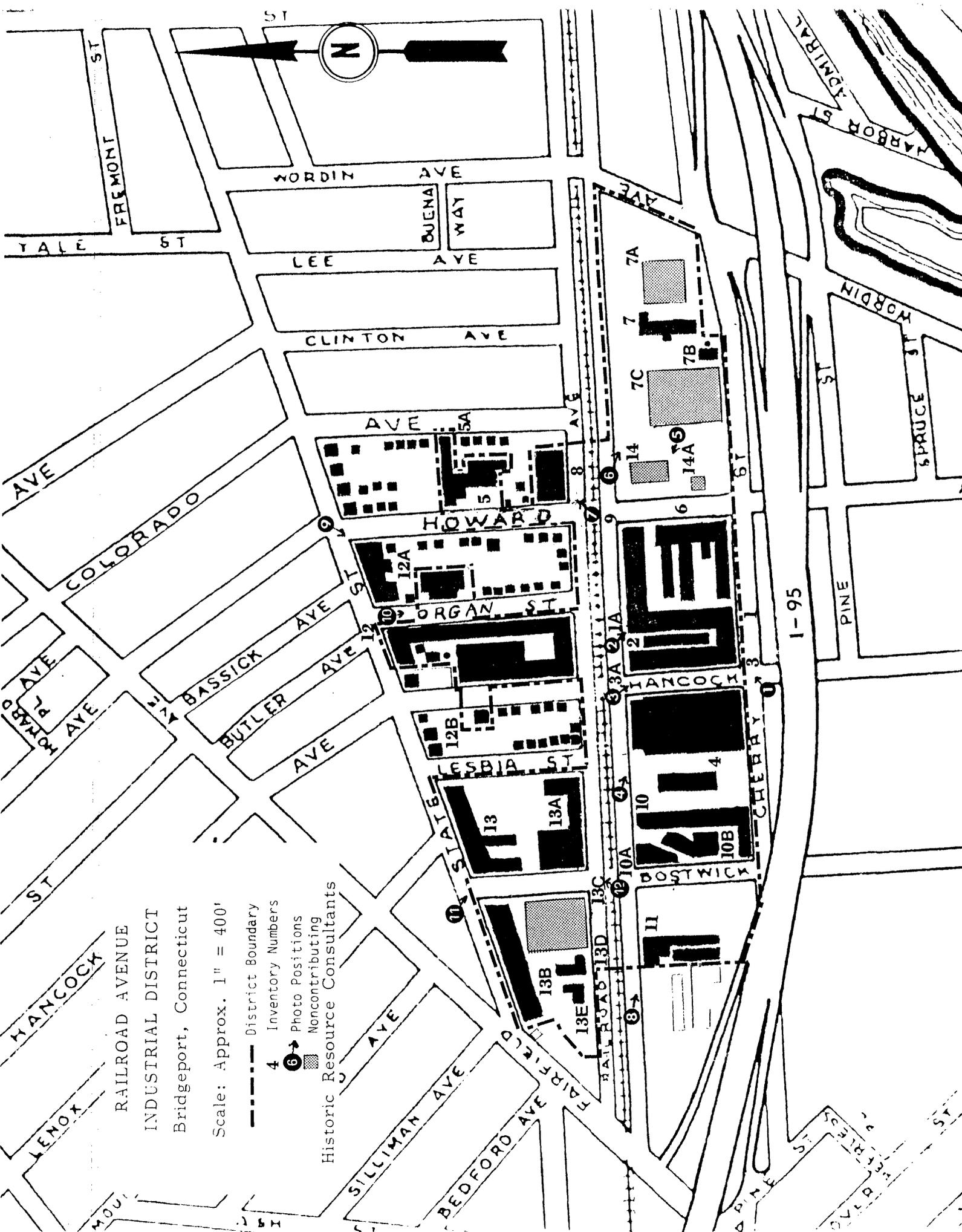
Page 4

Geographical Data (continued):

Areas of housing to the east, west, and north were systematically excluded from the district by drawing the boundary only around the factory buildings. These houses are mostly small gable-roofed dwellings c.1900 and generally lack architectural elaboration; many have had their original appearance severely altered, particularly with siding. Although this was a working-class area, the houses bear no direct historical relation to the factories in the district. None were owned by the companies, except briefly as part of factory expansion programs, and most of the residents who rented these houses worked outside the immediate area. For example, of the twelve occupants of the houses at the southern end of Organ and Howard Streets in 1917, there were ten whose place of work could be identified; only three worked in one of the factories which form the district.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Calculated using the 1917 Plat Book (G.M. Hopkins) and the Bridgeport Directory for the same year.



**RAILROAD AVENUE  
INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT**  
Bridgeport, Connecticut

Scale: Approx. 1" = 400'

- District Boundary
- 4 Inventory Numbers
- 6 Photo Positions
- Noncontributing

Historic Resource Consultants